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Adolescents' perceptions of parental involvement and parent-child relationships



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Context of research

Homework is not without importance in the lives of pupils. On the contrary, it is obvious that it matters in the lives of many schoolchildren and interferes in the climate of many families.

Thus, today, if our expectancy of adolescent is that they commit themselves during classroom hours, we also expect of them that they will extend the school day into the evening in the family sphere.

Work is indeed expected to continue after class, in the form of lessons and homework, involving de facto participation of parents or any other form of assistance in the absence of parental involvement. Homework and lessons correspond to a point of intersection between schools and families (Corno 2000; Hoover-Dempsey, Bassler & Burow 1995).

Objectives

Our interest here concerns to the importance of the family at adolescence as she supplies to the adolescent with development, the opportunities and the necessary regulation to acquire a psychological autonomy and new skills.

How do the young teenagers perceive the parental involvement, the support which they bring in answer to their needs of autonomy, acquisition of skills in particular in the school domain ?

Theoretical frame

Family has an important role in adolescent's understanding of Knowledge (*"Rapport au savoir"*) and in his access to sociocultural knowledge (Charlot, Bautier and Rochex, 1997), via educational practices more or less favorable to the implementation of homework strategies related to academic success. It is not so much direct help of parents for school activities that exercises a real influence on school results of their child that parental attitudes in family life and towards school.

Family characteristics may influence students' use of homework strategies (Xu and Corno, 2003). These strategies can be considered like dimensions of school mobilization. They permit to adolescents to be more responsible of their learning and so we can evaluate their homework's involvement.

Parental involvement in homework refers to specific parental interactions between parents and their children during activities of learning. Several forms were identified, for examples, a structured physical and psychological supervision ; encourage and facilitate autonomy ; give assistance, etc. (Cooper and al, 2000 ; Grolnick and Ryan, 1989).

In this study, we examine :

- What are adolescents' perceptions of parental involvement and parental competence when parents help them in monitoring homework ?
- What are adolescents' homework management strategies that they used towards parental involvement according to family structure ?

Methodology

Sample :

375 french adolescents 15 to 16 years-olds (178 boys and 197 girls) responded to the questionnaire on a voluntary basis.

Nearly 26 % of the participants were from single parent household or stepfamilies, while 74% lived with their biological parents.

The study was conducted in Secondary schools (level I) in urban, suburban and rural area in south of France.

Survey instrument :

Inspired by the Homework Process Inventory scale (Cooper et al., 1998) and by the Thinking about My Child's Homework or My Homework (Hoover-Dempsey et al., 1995a ; Walker et al., 2000). French version has been validated in Quebec by Deslandes and Bertrand (2004, 2005, in France by (Oubrayrie-Roussel & Safont-Mottay 2008 ; Safont-Mottay et al. 2008).

Inspired by Xu and Corno (2003) 5 features of homework management strategies were measured: arranging the environment, managing time, focusing attention, monitoring motivation, and monitoring and controlling emotion.

Résultats

• Strategies of *Monitoring and controlling emotion* are the most influenced both by family structure, parental involvement and parental competence perceived.

• Parental involvement and parental competence perceived influence strategies of *Monitoring motivation* independently of family structure. Here, independently of family structure, the interest carried to the child by his parents appears in a implicit way during homework assistance.

• Strategies of *Managing time* are influenced by the family structure combined with parental involvement.

• For *Arranging environment strategies*, there is an interactional impact of family structure and parental competence perceived as well as an impact of family structure associated to parental involvement on strategies of managing time.

• We observed finally the main effects of family structure and parental involvement independently both in the implementation of *Focusing attention* strategies of adolescents and only the impact of parental involvement on arranging environment strategies.

In conclusion, according to results, parental competence perceived has a moderate impact and is strictly link to parental involvement variable. The decision of parent to involve is linked to its parental competence perceived to help his(her) adolescent. This impact is not to be neglected as far as results show that perception of parental involvement influences auto-regulation strategies at adolescence.

Key-words : Adolescents in school, Family structure, Homework, Parental involvement

Ancova three factors

	Focusing attention		Monitoring motivation		Arranging environment		Monitoring & controlling emotion		Managing time	
	R ²	F	R ²	F	R ²	F	R ²	F	R ²	F
	.16		.26		.13		.13		.17	
Family structure		5.66*		NS		NS		3.31*		NS
Parental involvement		33.33***		NS		20.67***		11.11***		10.43***
Parental competence		NS		4.20*		NS		10.67***		7.47**
Parental involvement x Parental competence				8.47**						
Family x Parental competence						4.20*				
Family x Parental involvement										3.73**

* significatif à p<.05 ; ** significatif à p<.01 ; *** significatif à p<.001